Obituaries

Hastings Kamuzu Banda


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Former general practitioner Harlesden and president of Malawi (*b* 1898, two years after the British colonised his Chewa tribe; *q* Nashville, USA, 1937, Edinburgh 1941), died of pneumonia on 25 December 1997. Kamuzu (a little root) testifies to herbal help in his conception; he was baptised as Hastings. Witnessing an arrow removed from a man's back and later a woman dying in childbirth fired his interest in medicine. In Rhodesia and South Africa he worked in the mines, attended night school, and saved enough to travel to America. He experienced racism at first hand, witnessing a lynching near Chicago, but also benefited from white philanthropy and friendship. In 1937 he sailed for Scotland, where he spent three years in general practice. He refused to be conscripted during the war, and at its end established a general practice in Harlesden. He joined the Labour party, interacting with African intellectuals and activists in London, including Jomo Kenyatta and Kwame Nkrumah. His practice flourished and Banda is remembered with affection as a caring and kind doctor. In 1953 Banda went to Ghana for political and personal reasons: his affair with his receptionist was about to be made public. In Ghana allegations of illegal abortions led to suspension from the medical register. Abandoning his receptionist, he returned home to lead the struggle for independence.

He crafted a one party state, and between independence in 1964 and 1978 attempted with some success to improve agriculture, transport, education, and commerce. But this had a heavy price and most of his cabinet revolted, the dissidents being brutally suppressed by detention, exile, or death. Banda was the most totalitarian ruler in Africa. His eldership of the Church of Scotland helped him to bully church leaders into silence, while the troublesome Jehovah's Witnesses were "politically and religiously cleansed." Between 1964 and 1992 about 250 000 people were detained (from a population of seven to nine million). To the world a "benign moderate dictator," he left centralised decisions and skewed priorities that will take years to unlearn. And he neglected the health services: until the 1980s it was a crime to discuss family planning; today Malawi has one of the highest HIV infection rates in the world. Jack Mapanje, a poet and university lecturer detained for four years, observes: "Dr Banda built more prisons than hospitals—rather strange for a medical doctor." [John Lwanda]

Lambert Ulrich ("Bertie") Camm

General practitioner Newick, Sussex, 1947-83 (*b* Highgate 1912; *q* Guy's 1936; MRCGP), died of myocardial infarction on 3 December 1997. After house jobs he joined the Indian Medical Service, subsequently serving in the Western Desert, Eritrea, and the North West Frontier. After the war he was a civil surgeon in the Punjab but returned to Britain in 1947. In Sussex his practice developed over the years, with a purpose built health centre. He also became the first medical officer for Plumpton Racecourse, improving the medical facilities. In retirement he enjoyed sailing, often crossing the channel with his second wife as his long suffering crew. In later years his workshop and garden took the place of the boat. Predeceased by his first wife, he leaves a second wife, Ruth; two sons (one, myself, a consultant radiologist) and a daughter (Baroness Cumberlege, lately junior minister for health); eight grandchildren; and three great grandchildren. [Peter Camm]

Reginald Sydney ("Reggie") Murley


RCS

Former consultant surgeon Royal Northern Hospital (*b* Wandsworth 1916; *q* St Bartholomew's (honours in medicine and surgery) 1939; MS, FRCS; KBE), *d* 2 October 1997. Believing that war was inevitable, he joined the Territorial Army, and a week before the second world war broke out found himself in the 168 City of London Calvary Field Ambulance. He always said that the army was the best university he could have had. He travelled extensively, read widely, and learnt to ride a horse. He gained extensive experience in managing craniofacial injuries and orthopaedic trauma. After demobilisation he became an anatomy demonstrator at Cambridge and then first assistant at St Bartholomew's Hospital. His involvement in medical politics started just before the National Health Service, and at a special meeting of the fellows of the Royal College of Surgeons he criticised the president for "a tactical blunder which had confused and divided the profession, weakened the position of the BMA, and strengthened the hand of the minister." Though the rebels lost, Reggie remained opposed to "nationalised medicine" and for many years staunchly supported the Fellowship for Freedom in Medicine. However, by the 1960s his disillusion with the NHS had become so great that he joined the BMA council—though his involvement was short lived, given that he became intolerant of what he described as "council gas bags."

Nevertheless, he always saw himself first and foremost as a practising surgeon. He did some fine research on Geoffrey Keynes's conservative approach to breast cancer, showing that it had advantages over the then more accepted radical mastectomy. He also worked on the detection and prevention of venous thrombosis, gaining a Hunterian professorship and becoming an early advocate of emergency pulmonary embolectomy. As one of its first surgical tutors and a regional adviser, he was elected to the council of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1970 and became its president on Bastille Day (14 July) 1977, setting about his task with customary vigour. His great hero was John Hunter and he later became chairman of the trustees of the Hunterian Museum. His opinions, delivered in a booming voice, always carried weight, while his friendliness and sense of humour brought him many friends. He was also an international person, being a strong supporter of the International Society of Surgery. He leaves a wife, Daphne, three sons, and three daughters. [Terence English, Rowan Nicks]